

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----060516 181632Z /53

R 181505Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8121
USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS BE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VALLETTA 00969

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

EXDIS

FOR ADM SHEAR AND GEN HAIG FROM AMB LAINGEN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MT, IT
SUBJECT: MINTOFF INVITATION TO ADMIRAL SHEAR

REF: USDOCOSOUTH DTG 150904Z APR 78

1. VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR INFORMING US OF INVITATION FROM MINTOFF THROUGH MALTESE CONSUL GENERAL NAPLES. TO SUMMARIZE, I SUGGEST THIS APPROACH BE KEPT IN THE HOLDING PATTERN WHERE YOU APPEAR TO HAVE PUT IT, AT LEAST UNTIL WE SEE WHAT COMES OF MARIO FELICE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON THIS WEEK AND UNTIL THE NOW RESUMED MINTOFF DIALOGUE WITH ITALIANS AND FRENCH MOVES FURTHER ALONG.

2. MINTOFF'S TACTICAL PURPOSES IN EXTENDING THIS INVITATION SEEM REASONABLY CLEAR; I.E. TO INVOLVE THE SENIOR NATO COMMANDER IN THE AREA IN SUPPORT OF HIS EFFORTS TO GET ITALIANS AND FRENCH (AND ULTIMATELY GERMANS AND US) TO MOVE MORE RAPIDLY AND SYMPATHETICALLY IN SUPPORT OF
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MINTOFF'S NEUTRALITY CONCEPT. IN LIGHT OF THOSE PURPOSES WE THINK YOUR ASBESTOS GLOVE RESPONSE WAS EXACTLY RIGHT.

3. AS YOU KNOW USG POLICY IS TO KEEP THE EUROPEANS OUT IN FRONT ON THE ISSUE OF POST-1979 MALTA, A POLICY WHICH DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR PLAYING SOME SUPPORTIVE ROLE WHEN WE SEE HOW THE DIALOGUE WITH THE

EUROPEANS EVOLVES. THAT BASIC POLICY POSTURE HAS RECENTLY BEEN REITERATED BY WASHINGTON IN THE INTERAGENCY REVIEW OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN MALTA JUST COMPLETED. (STATE 90253 BEING REPEATED.)

4. CONTRARY TO WHAT THE MALTESE CONSUL GENERAL ALLEGED TO YOU THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEANS HAS NOT PROVED BARREN - CERTAINLY NOT YET. IT WAS BARREN FOR SOME SIX MONTHS, IN GOOD PART BECAUSE OF MINTOFF HAVING BROKEN OFF THE DIALOGUE, BUT IT IS NOW RESUMED AND A FURTHER SESSION IS SCHEDULED FOR ROME IN EARLY MAY. MINTOFF OF COURSE HAS HIS OWN REASONS FOR ALLEGING TO YOU AND OTHERS THAT THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS ARE BEING UNRESPONSIVE; AS YOU NOTE, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO PULL OUT ALL STOPS IN HIS QUEST FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AS WE MOVE CLOSER TO MARCH 1979.

5. THE CONSUL GENERAL'S CONTENTION TO YOU THAT MINTOFF IS PREPARED TO EXCLUDE THE ITALIANS AND FRENCH FROM THE ISLAND IS MORE OF MINTOFF'S GAMESMANSHIP, AS IS HIS CLAIM THAT HE HAS NOT CHOSEN TO INVOKE THE WIDE VARIETY OF "OTHER DIPLO-MATIC" CHANNELS SUPPOSEDLY OPEN TO HIM. MINTOFF HAS FELT SOME HEAT FROM THE LIBYANS RECENTLY, PARTICULARLY ON CONCESSIONARY OIL PRICE ARRANGEMENTS AND MEDIAN LINE ISSUES, AND AS A RESULT WE THINK MINTOFF HAS BEEN REMINDED OF THE UNATTRACTIVENESS OF GOING SOLO WITH THE ARABS. MOREOVER, AS THE CONSUL GENERAL POINTED OUT, THE VAST MAJORITY OF CONFIDENTIAL

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MALTESE HAVE A WESTERN ORIENTATION, AS WELL AS A CULTURAL AVERSION TO LIBYANS, A POLITICAL FACT OF LIFE WHICH MINTOFF CANNOT IGNORE.

6. THAT BEING SAID, AND WHILE CONTINUING TO REMIND BOTH THE MALTESE AND THE EUROPEANS THAT WE BELIEVE POST-1979 MALTA SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AS A REGIONAL ISSUE ON A REGIONAL BASIS, WE HAVE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT WE ARE OPEN TO DIALOGUE WITH THE MALTESE. IN THIS CONNECTION WASHINGTON HAS AGREED TO RECEIVE MARIO FELICE AS MINTOFF'S EMISSARY, TO HEAR IN THIS DIRECT FASHION WHAT MINTOFF HAS IN MIND FOR MALTA AND WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM US. FELICE LEAVES TODAY FOR WASHINGTON AND WILL SEE UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM LATER THIS WEEK.

7. PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS THE RESUMED EUROPEAN DIALOGUE, WE THINK THE POSTURE YOU TOOK ON MINTOFF'S INVITATION IS EXACTLY RIGHT FOR THE PRESENT. AS WE READ YOUR REPORT, YOU HAVE NOT REJECTED MINTOFF'S OVERTURE COMPLETELY, NOTING INSTEAD SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED AND PUTTING IT IN A KIND OF HOLDING PATTERN. WE THINK IT SHOULD STAY THERE FOR NOW. WE

ASSUME WE WILL WANT TO KEEP OUR OPTIONS AS OPEN AS POSSIBLE
AS THINGS DEVELOP WITH THE EUROPEANS, AND THE POSSIBILITY
OF AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN YOU AND MINTOFF ON SOME
OF THE STRATEGIC REALITIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN IS ONE THAT
COULD BE USEFUL AT SOME POINT. WE MUST EMPHASIZE HOWEVER,
THAT FOR THE PRESENT, WE HAVE NO REASON TO THINK HE HAS
MADE ANY FUNDAMENTAL ADJUSTMENT IN HIS POLITICAL/STRATEGIC
VIEW OF MALTA AND THE SUPERPOWER PRESENCE IN EITHER MALTA
OR THE MEDITERRANEAN GENERALLY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 VALLETTA 00969

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8. MEANWHILE, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU REPEAT TO WASHINGTON
THE REPORT ON YOUR CONVERSATION (AND WE ARE DOING THE
SAME WITH THIS MESSAGE) FOR THEIR INFORMATION AND FOR
WHATEVER COMMENT THEY MAY HAVE. LAINGEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, POLICIES, INVITATIONS, MEETINGS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VALLET00969
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780166-0020
Format: TEL
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780442/aaaabjuj.tel
Line Count: 157
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 109c8bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2925720
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MINTOFF INVITATION TO ADMIRAL SHEAR
TAGS: PEPR, MT, IT, US, (SHEAR)
To: COM
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/109c8bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014